

We Claim:

1. A walk-behind loader, which comprises:

(a) a frame having a front and a rear and a pair of laterally spaced uprights at the rear of the frame;

(b) an internal combustion engine carried on the frame;

(c) left and right endless drive tracks carried on the frame for propelling the frame in forward and reverse directions, the drive tracks being powered by the internal combustion engine;

(d) left and right loader arms pivotally connected to upper ends of the left and right uprights, respectively, wherein the loader arms extend forwardly and downwardly from the pivotal connections of the loader arms to the uprights to terminate in front ends that extend over the front of the frame, the loader arms having a lowermost position in which the front ends of the loader arms are generally adjacent the ground with the loader arms capable of being raised into elevated positions in which the front ends of the loader arms are spaced further above the ground than in the lowermost position of the loader arms, and wherein the loader arms are configured with an open space between the loader arms providing substantially unobstructed viewing towards the front in elevated positions of the loader arms when the open space is raised in front of an operator's face;

(e) a ground grooming or working attachment pivotally connected to the front ends of the loader arms;

(f) at least one actuator extending between the loader arms and the frame for pivoting the loader arms upwardly and downwardly relative to the frame about the pivotal connection of the loader arms to the frame;

(g) at least one actuator extending between the loader arms and the attachment for pivoting the attachment relative to the loader arms; and

(h) a control system positioned at the rear of the frame and comprising a control handle configured to be gripped and manipulated by a standing operator walking behind the frame during operation of the loader, wherein the control system is located sufficiently close to the rear of the frame and the rear of the frame is configured to permit the standing operator walking behind the frame to comfortably reach and operate the control system with the operator's arms being bent at the elbow.

2. A walk-behind loader, which comprises:

(a) a frame having a front and a rear and at least one upright at the rear of the frame on one side of the frame;

(b) an internal combustion engine carried on the frame;

(c) left and right endless drive tracks carried on the frame for propelling the frame in forward and reverse directions, the drive tracks being powered by the internal combustion engine;

(d) at least one loader arm pivotally connected to an upper end of the upright, wherein the loader arm extends forwardly and downwardly from the pivotal connection of the loader arm to the upright to terminate in a front end, the loader arm having a lowermost position in which the front end of the loader arm is generally adjacent the ground with the loader arm capable of being raised into elevated positions in which the front end of the loader arm is spaced further above the ground than in the lowermost position of the loader arm;

(e) a ground grooming or working attachment pivotally connected to the front end of the loader arm;

(f) at least one actuator extending between the loader arm and the frame for pivoting the loader arm upwardly and downwardly relative to the frame about the pivotal connection of the loader arm to the frame;

(g) at least one actuator extending between the loader arm and the attachment for pivoting the attachment relative to the loader arm; and

(h) a control system positioned at the rear of the frame and comprising a control handle configured to be gripped and manipulated by a standing operator walking behind the frame during operation of the loader, wherein the control system is located sufficiently close to the rear of the frame and the rear of the frame is configured to permit the standing operator walking behind the frame to comfortably reach and operate the control system with the operator's arms being bent at the elbow.

3. The walk-behind loader of claim 2, wherein a single upright and a single loader arm are provided on the frame.

4. The walk-behind loader of claim 3, wherein the single upright and the single loader arm are provided on a left side of the frame.

5. The walk-behind loader of claim 2, wherein a pair of uprights and a pair of loader arms are provided on the frame.

6. The walk-behind loader of claim 2, further including an engine hood or shroud, and wherein the loader arm is located beneath an upper portion of the engine hood or shroud when the loader arm is in its lowermost position.

7. A walk-behind loader, which comprises:

(a) a frame;

(b) an internal combustion engine carried on the frame;

(c) left and right endless drive tracks carried on the frame for propelling the frame in forward and reverse directions, the drive tracks being powered by the internal combustion engine;

(d) at least one loader arm pivotally connected to the frame, wherein the loader arm extends forwardly and downwardly from the pivotal connection of the loader arm to the frame to terminate in a front end, the loader arm having a lowermost position in which the front end of the loader arm is generally adjacent the ground with the loader arm capable of being raised into elevated positions in which the front end of the loader arm is spaced further above the ground than in the lowermost position of the loader arm, the loader arm including a transverse cross-member extending perpendicularly relative to the loader arm and fixed to the loader arm with the cross-member being located behind the front end of the loader arm;

(e) a ground grooming or working attachment pivotally connected to the front end of the loader arm;

(f) at least one actuator extending between the cross-member on the loader arm and the frame for pivoting the loader arm upwardly and downwardly relative to the frame about the pivotal connection of the loader arm to the frame;

(g) at least one actuator extending between the cross-member on the loader arm and the attachment for pivoting the attachment relative to the loader arm; and

(h) a control system positioned at the rear of the frame and comprising a control handle configured to be gripped and manipulated by a standing operator walking behind the frame during operation of the loader.

8. The walk-behind loader of claim 7, wherein a single loader arm is provided on the frame and the cross-member is a cantilevered portion of the loader arm.

9. The walk-behind loader of claim 7, wherein a pair of loader arms are provided on the frame and the cross-member extends between and is joined to both loader arm.

10. The walk-behind loader of claim 9, wherein the loader arms are substantially unobstructed between their pivotal connections to the frame and the cross-member to provide a substantially open viewing space for the operator when the loader arms are raised.

11. The walk-behind loader of claim 7, wherein the frame has a front and a rear, and wherein the transverse cross-member generally overlies the front of the frame when the loader arm is in its lowermost position.

12. The walk-behind loader of claim 11, wherein the loader arm is pivoted to the rear of the frame.